

SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH IN THE COPTIC LITURGICAL BOOKS

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The image of Severus of Antioch¹ is depicted in liturgical books² of the Coptic Church as either an author of Liturgical texts³ or as a commemorated Saint.

A) As Author

In his monumental book, Graf⁴ has mentioned that Severus of Antioch is the author of the prayer of reconciliation in the Coptic liturgy of St Gregory. A rethinking of the question shows clearly that Severus is a prolific author in the Coptic Liturgy.

a) The Euchologion of the White Monastery

One of the earliest witnesses in the Coptic Liturgical books is the Euchologion of the White Monastery, written in the Xth century,⁵ mentioned several prayers attributed to Severus of Antioch.⁶

1) Epiclesis and intercession of the Anaphora of Severus of Antioch.

2) Prayer of fraction of the Patriarch Severus.⁷

3) Prayer of fraction of the Patriarch (May be Severus).⁸

¹ For Severus of Antioch in Coptic Literature cf. Lucchesi, "Notice," 291-293, especially 292-293 (bibliography).

² For these books cf. Malak, "Les Livres Liturgiques," 1-35; Zanetti, "Bohairic Liturgical Manuscripts," 65-94.

³ For the other works of Severus in the Coptic Literature cf. Porcher, "Sévère d'Antioche," 119-124; Crum, "Sévère d'Antioche," 92-104.

⁴ Graf, *Geschichte*, 420:118/4.

⁵ Lanne, *Le Grand Euchologe*, 273 (9).

⁶ Lanne, op.cit., fol. 101-102, 105-108, p. 312(48)-315 (51), 316 (52)-323 (59). The Coptic version is not mentioned in Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*; here after (CPG).

⁷ Lanne, op.cit., fol. 182, p. 370 (106)-371 (107). Not in the CPG and not in the Syriac Anaphora of Severus.

⁸ Lanne, op.cit., 390 (126)-391 (127) only two lines.

b) *The actual Euchologion*

The name of Saint Severus of Antioch occurs several times in the Coptic **Euchologion**.

We will refer to the best edition of this book prepared by Abd al-Masih Salib and printed by Claudius Labib⁹ which is considered as nearly critical edition.¹⁰

4) The Liturgy of Saint Gregory contains a prayer Reconciliation attributed to Saint Severus of Antioch beginning with "O Christ, our God," ¹¹

5) The Liturgy of Saint Cyril contains a prayer Reconciliation attributed to Saint Severus of Antioch beginning with "O Prince of Life and King of the Ages, God to whom every knee bows," ¹²

c) *The Troparion OMovoyevn̄s*¹³

6) "O Only Begotten Son and the Word of God the immortal and everlasting, accepting everything for our salvation, the Incarnated from the Theotokos ever-Virgin Saint Mary, without change, Christ God becoming Man, crucified, through death treating death, one of the Holy Trinity to whom is glorification with the Father and the Holy Spirit, **Save us.**"

This monostrophic well known troparion of the Byzantine Liturgy, which is found also in the Greek Liturgies of Saint Mark and Saint James¹⁴ but it does not occur in any of the Three Coptic Liturgies of the Coptic Church. It is sung, however, in the Coptic Church on three other occasions namely at the Consecration of Bishops, the Consecration of the Holy Chrism and the Canonical Hour of Sext on Good Friday.¹⁵

It contains only one long sentence with one finite verb i.e.: the last word "**save us.**" It is true that the hymn-writer of this troparion has selected almost of his vocabulary from other sources, and has combined them to form a pattern which also became traditional from the earliest

⁹ Abd al-Masih, S. *πικχωμ ντε πιερχολογιον εθουγαν* (hereafter *Euch* 1902).

¹⁰ Zanetti, "Esquisse d'une typologie," 407-418.

¹¹ *Euch* 1902, 464-468 (not in *CPG*).

¹² *Euch* 1902, 563-568; *CPG* 7078, cf. Brightman, *Liturgies*, 162; Störk, *Koptische Handschriften*, 209 (Ms from the 13 century).

¹³ *CPG* N° 6891, p. 305; Christ / Paranikas, *Anthologia*, 52; Grumel, "L'auteur et la date," 398-418.

¹⁴ Brightman, *op.cit.*, 33, 116.

¹⁵ Burmester, *The Rite of Consecration of the Patriarch*, 56 n. 6 (hereafter *Consecration Patriarch*).

times. Yet this is no *random selection and combination*, but one in which a *fine balance* of phrases and sentences is created; in which a definite *pattern of verbal repetition* is cleverly constructed.

This hymn is a compilation the faith Symbols of Niceae-Constantinople and Chalcedon which could be accepted by both Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Churches.¹⁶

In the Byzantine Rite it is ascribed to the Emperor Justinian¹⁷ and in the Syriac Rite to Severus of Antioch, between 535-536 A.D.¹⁸

d) *The Rite of Baptism*

7) According to a Manuscript from the Monastery of Saint Macarius dated from the 12/13th century and preserved now in the Collection of Hamburg, the prayer of the Sanctus of the Baptism "We lift up our eyes unto thee, O Lord; and the eyes of our soul up to thee, O Lord our God. And we pray thee, O Lord Almighty, God of our fathers, who didst create heaven and earth and all their array; who didst create the waters above the heaven; who didst gather the waters place; who didst bind the sea and the confine the depths and didst seal them with thy glorious and fearful name; in the presence of whose power all things fear and tremble. Thou, O our Master, didst establish the sea by thy power, thou didst break the heads of the dragons in the waters."¹⁹

It is noteworthy that this attribution could be authentic. The same prayer is also found in the Greek, and in the Syriac Rites. We may assume that Severus wrote first in Greek and after it was translated to Syriac and Coptic.²⁰ We have shown previously that there are

¹⁶ Barkhuizen, "Justinian's Hymn," 3-5.

¹⁷ According to George Monachos (the monk), author of the world Chronicle, which runs from Adam to 842 and a good user of John Malalas gave to us his religious standpoint of an anti-iconoclast and mentioned that the author is Justinian, cf. Georgius Monachos, *Chronicon*: de Boor, *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*, Leipzig ²1904, ed. Wirth Stuttgart 1978, Vol. II, 627.3.7.

¹⁸ Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy*, 93; Maspero, *Histoire des Patriarches*, 104 n. 11, P.G. CVIII, 477; King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom*, 164.

¹⁹ Störk, op.cit., p. 314. For an English translation cf. R.M. Wooley, *Coptic Offices*, London 1930 (*Translations of Christian Literature Series III — Liturgical Texts*), 35-36. It is noteworthy that this prayer is not the same as the rite of Baptism attributed to Severus of Antioch in the Syriac Church, cf. Murad Saliba Barsom, *The Sacrament of the Holy Baptism according to the Ancient Rite of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*, The Syrian Orthodox Church in the United States of America and Canada, 1974, 86-92. For the works of Severus concerning the Rite of Baptism cf. Varghese, *Les Onctions Baptismales*, 170-180.

²⁰ Burmester, "Baptismal Rite," 37-39. But in the Syriac rite is attributed to James of Edessa.

liturgical connections between Chalcedonian and the anti-Chalcedon.²¹

B) As commemorated Saint

1) The Absolution of the Ministers in the Euchologion.

“May your servants, the ministers of this day the hegomen, the priests, the deacons, the clergy, all the people and my weak self, be absolved from the mouth of the All Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and from the mouth of the one only holy universal and apostolic church, from the mouth of the twelve apostles, and from the mouth of the beholder of God the evangelist Mark, the holy apostle and the martyr, the patriarch Saint Severus, our teacher Dioscorus, Saint Athanasius”²²

We may notice that Severus followed Saint Mark the founder of the Church of Alexandria²³ in Egypt and came before Dioscorus, Athanasius, Peter the seal of Martyrs, John Chrysostom, Cyril, Basil, Gregory!

2) In the Commemoration of Saint in the Liturgy of Saint Basil, his name is mentioned after the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, Stephen the archdeacon, Saint Mark.

He is followed by the other Coptic patriarchs and Saints.²⁴

3) In the Deacon’s hymn of the diptych of Patriarch of the Coptic Church the name of Severus occurs after the Patriarch Benjamin II “**ΚΕ ΤΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΦΟΡΟΥ ΣΕΥΗΡΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΟΥ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΙΑΣ.**” The Spirit Bearer Severus the Patriarch of Antioch.²⁵

4) In the Commemoration of Saints in the Liturgy of Saint Gregory, Saint Severus has the same place as in the Liturgy of Saint Basil, i.e. after the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, Stephen the archdeacon, Saint Mark.

He is followed by the other Coptic patriarchs and Saints.²⁶

5) In the Commemoration of Saints in the Liturgy of Saint Cyril, Saint Severus has the same place as in the Liturgy of Saint Gregory and Saint Basil, i.e. after the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, Stephen the archdeacon, Saint Mark.

²¹ Youssef, “Liturgical Connections,” 394-400.

²² *Euch* 1902, 231-234.

²³ We find another order in the text of Boston, cf. Brakmann, “Severus unter den Alexandrinern,” 54-58.

²⁴ *Euch* 1902, 352-362.

²⁵ *Euch* 1902, 373.

²⁶ *Euch* 1902, 519-522.

He is followed by the other Coptic patriarchs and Saints.²⁷

6) Magma' of the Psalmodia (Momento Sanctorum). We find a stanza containing the "Heroes" of the Orthodoxy.

ⲧⲱⲃⲉⲗ ⲁⲑⲁⲛⲁⲥⲓⲟⲥ ⲡⲓⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲓⲕⲟⲥ ⲥⲉϥⲏⲣⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲙ ⲁⲓⲟⲥⲕⲟⲣⲟⲥ ...

"Pray for us Athanasius the Apostolic, Severus and Dioscorus ...".²⁸

7) The Doxology²⁹ Adam³⁰ contains a stanza dedicated to Saint Severus. This stanza is mentioned after the Virgin Mary.³¹

ⲡⲓⲛⲓⲱⲧ ⲙⲡⲁⲧⲣⲓⲁⲣⲏⲥ ⲡⲉⲛⲓⲱⲧ ⲁⲃⲃⲁ ⲥⲉϥⲏⲣⲟⲥ ⲫⲏ ⲉⲧⲁ
ⲛⲉⲓⲓⲥⲱⲱⲟⲩ ⲉⲉϥ ⲉⲣⲟϥⲱⲛⲓ ⲙⲡⲉⲛⲛⲟϥ

"The great Patriarch, our father Abba Severus, which his holy teaching enlightened our intellect."

8) There is also a Doxology Batos dedicated to Saint Severus.³²

9) The Synaxarium of the Coptic Church³³ 2 Paopi,³⁴ 10 Kihak, 14 Meshir.³⁵

10) The Difnar is another Liturgical book mentioned³⁶ for the days of 2 Paopi,³⁷ 10 Kihak, 14 Meshir.³⁸

11) There is no psali dedicated to Severus of Antioch in the actual Book of Psalis³⁹ but a Manuscript dated 897 A.D. and preserved in the collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library contains two psalis dedicated to Severus of Antioch.⁴⁰ There is also another psali in a Manuscript from the Monastery of Saint Macarius.⁴¹ In the Psali of all saints recited dur-

²⁷ *Euch* 1902, 597-600.

²⁸ Mina al-Baramousi, *ⲧⲱⲥⲁⲗⲙⲟⲗⲓⲁ*, 87 (here after Mina).

²⁹ Abd al-Masih, "Doxologies," *BSAC* 4 (1938), 97-113; *BSAC* 5 (1939), 175-191; *BSAC* 6 (1940), 19-76; *BSAC* 8 (1942), 31-61; *BSAC* 11 (1945), 95-158.

³⁰ Youssef, "Note sur la traduction," 91-93.

³¹ Mina, 280.

³² But not in the edition of Mina but in the edition of The Society of the Churches Renaissance, p. 445-447, cf. also Abd al-Masih, "Doxologies," *BSAC* 6 (1940), 31.

³³ For a study of the different versions of this liturgical book cf. Coquin, "Le synaxaire," 351-365. For this book cf. Colin, "Le Synaxaire Ethiopien," 273-317.

³⁴ Basset, *Le Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite*, 313-314; Forget, *Synaxarium Alexandrinum*, 48-49.

³⁵ This commemoration is attested by the calender of the VIIth century, cf. Gascou, "Un nouveau calendrier," 384-392, especially 390-391.

³⁶ Cf. Gabra, "Untersuchungen I," 37-52; id. "Untersuchungen II," 49-68.

³⁷ Burmester, "The Turûhat of the Saints," 164-165.

³⁸ Burmester, "The Turûhat of the Saints," 134-135.

³⁹ Al-Maqari, *Kitab al-absâliyat wal-Turûhât Watos wa Âdam*. Cairo 1913.

⁴⁰ Kuhn / Tait, *Thirteen Coptic Acrostic Hymns*, 66-75, 116-125. We can expect that each hymn was for each feast of Severus.

⁴¹ Störk, op.cit., p. 409. This manuscript goes back to 13-14th century. It contains the saints venerated in the Monastery of Saint Macarius viz. the Virgin Mary, John the Little, the Archangel Gabriel, John the Baptist, Elijah the Prophet, the consacration of the Sanc-

ing the month of Choiahk, we find a stanza dedicated to the *Orthodox Spirit-bearer our masters* Severus and Dioscorus.⁴²

12) The book of Glorifications.⁴³

This is Severus the great Patriarch concerning whom the angel inform the priest.⁴⁴

How dare you to offer the sacrifice and the patriarch is present.⁴⁵

13) The Rite of Consecration of the Patriarch of Alexandria, we find only three saints are mentioned: the Virgin Mary, Saint Mark (the traditionally founder of the Coptic Church) and Saint Severus of Antioch.

“Through the intercessions of our Lady, the Mistress of us all, the Holy Mother of God who is Ever Virgin, Holy Mary, and the supplications of our father, blessed in all things, Mark the holy Apostle and Evangelist, and of our father, honoured in all things, Severus of Antioch and the whole of Saints who are accepted before Jesus Christ.”⁴⁶

14) In the Coptic Lectionary:⁴⁷

In the Coptic Lectionary, Severus of Antioch has two commemorations, i.e. 14 Meshir (his death) and 2 Paopi (his coming to Egypt).

The first feast is the readings consancted to foreigners bishops such as Basil of Caesarea, Gregory the Armenian, Sylvestre of Rome, Paul of Antioch, Liberius of Rome, Felix of Rome, Gregory the thaumaturge, Peter of Edessa, Eustathius of Antioch, Epiphanius of Antioch, Theophile of Alexandria.⁴⁸

The second feast is the readings consancted to the Oriental Patriarchs such as Dionysios of Alexandria, Dioscore, Cyriacus of Jerusalem, Zacharias of Alexandria, Acacius of Constantinople, Theonas of Alexandria, Benjamin of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Michael of Alexandria, Alexandre of Jerusalem, Athanasius the Apostolic, Alexandre of Constantinople.⁴⁹

Thus we find that Severus is seen — in the Coptic Church — as Leader of the Christianity.

tuary of Benjamin, the XLIX Martyrs of Scetis, Severus of Antioch, Saint Macarius, the Archangel Michael, the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Nativity of the Lord.

⁴² Labib, *ⲡⲭⲱⲙ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲧⲫⲁⲕⲙⲱⲗⲓⲁ ⲉⲑⲱ*, 531.

⁴³ For this book cf. Youssef, “Un témoin méconnu,” 139-147; id. “Une relecture,” 77-83; cf. also Abd al-Masih, “Doxologies,” *BSAC* 6 (1940), 71.

⁴⁴ Burmester, “The Liturgy,” 79-84.

⁴⁵ Al-Moharraqi, *ⲡⲭⲱⲙ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲛⲓⲭⲓⲛⲧⲱⲟⲩ ⲉⲑⲱ*, 350-352; Abd al-Masih, “Doxologies,” *BSAC* 6 (1940), 71.

⁴⁶ Burmester, *Consecration Patriarch*, 32 (text), 72 (translation).

⁴⁷ For the system of reading in the Coptic Church cf. Zanetti, *Les lectionnaires*, 1-50.

⁴⁸ De Fenoyl, *Le Sanctoral Copte*, p. 123, p. 41-42.

⁴⁹ De Fenoyl, op.cit., p. 73, p. 43.

In order to give a complete idea about Severus of Antioch we will enumerate his titles from the Coptic Liturgical Books:

Coptic Title	Translation	Reference
ΠΙΚΕΒΕΡΝΙΤΗΣ ΕΤΤΑ- ΧΡΗΟΥΤ	Strong guide	Doxology Batos
ΠΙΡΕΩΜΙΩΙ ΝΚΑΛΩΣ	good fighter	Doxol. Batos
ΠΙΡΕΩΒΡΟ ΞΕΝ ΝΙΒΩΤΣ	winner of battles	Doxol. Batos
ΠΙΞΗΒΣ ΕΤΑΦΕΡΟΥΩΙΝΙ	lamp which had lighted	Doxol. Batos
ΠΙΚΥΡΙΞ ΝΤΕ ΤΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΙΑ	herald of the Orthodoxy	Doxol. Batos, Difnar
ΠΙΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ	the Patriarch	Doxol. Batos
ΠΙΡΕΩΤΣΒΩ ΝΤΕ ΠΙΟΖΙ ΝΛΟΓΙΚΟΝ ΝΤΕ ΠΧϚ	the teacher of the rational flock of Christ	Doxol. Batos
ΠΙΡΕΩΤΣΒΩ ΝΤΕ ΠΤΟΙΚΟΟΥΜΕΝΗ ΤΗΡΣ	the teacher of the whole world	Difnar
ΠΣΑΞ ΝΤΕ ΤΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΙΑ	teacher (doctor) of the Orthodoxy	Doxology Batos
ΠΙΝΙΩΤ ΜΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ	the Great Patriarch	Doxol. Adam, Glorifications
ΠΙΣΟΦΟΣ ΜΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ	the wise patriarch	Difnar
ΠΕΝΙΩΤ ΑΒΒΑ ΣΕΥΗΡΟΣ	our father Abba Severus	Doxology Adam
ΘΝΟΥΝΙ ΝΤΕ ΤΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΙΑ	the root of Orthodoxy	Difnar
ΠΙΦΩΣΤΗΡ ΝΑΛΙΘΙΝΟΝ	the true star	Difnar
ΠΙΝΙΩΤ ΜΜΑΝΕΣΩΟΥ	the great shepherd	Difnar
ΠΙΔΟΓΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ ΝΨΦΗΡΙ	the marvelous dogmatist	Difnar
ΠΙΣΤΥΛΛΟΣ ΝΤΕ ΤΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ	the pillar of the Church	Difnar
ΠΙΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ ΕΘΟΥΑΒ ΣΕΥΗΡΟΣ	the Holy patriarch Severus	the Absolution of the Ministers, Commemoration of Saints in the Liturgies of Basil, Gregory, Cyril
ΖΑΝΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΜΠΝΑΤΟΥΦΟΡΟΣ ΠΕΝΣΑΞ ΣΕΥΗΡΟΣ	the orthodox Spirit-bearer our teacher (Doctor) Severus	Psali of all saints for the month Choiakh

Conclusion

The place of Severus of Antioch is unique in the Coptic Church. His place is just after Saint Mark the (traditionally) founder of the Coptic Church in the three liturgies accepted in the Coptic Church. He is hence considered as a second founder.

Severus has also three feasts in the Coptic calendar which shows how important is his cult. He is author of several prayers in the Coptic Liturgy — in addition to the troparion o Μονογενης.

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